

**The development of the M.A. (Hons) in  
Primary Education with Teaching  
Qualification**

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**Abstract**

This paper outlines the development of an innovative teacher education programme, consisting of a four year master's course in primary education with qualified teacher status at the University of Glasgow. The origins of the course and underpinning principles are explained, as well as its progress over the first six years, including successes and problems. It is argued that this programme, which combines in-depth curriculum study, first-hand research and intensive professional development through practical experience, meets the principles of Teachers for a New Era and the recommendations of the Donaldson Report, as well as preparing teachers to meet the demands of A Curriculum for Excellence.

**Keywords**

Teacher education; Scotland; master's course; induction; professional development.

**Introduction**

The innovative four-year master's programme with qualified teacher status (QTS) described in this article pioneered this kind of combined master's degree with teaching qualification in Scotland. It will be argued that the programme embodies the themes of the Teachers for a New Era (2006) and the recommendations of the Donaldson Report, Teaching Scotland's Future (2011), as well as helping to prepare teachers to meet the demands of A Curriculum for Excellence (Scottish Executive, 2004). Subsequently, its pattern of specific pathways of expertise is being adopted by other universities in Scotland.

**Early planning and key principles**

The degree of the MA (Hons) in Primary Education with teaching qualification offered by the University of Glasgow was first applied for in 1999, following the amalgamation of the St Andrew's College of Education and Glasgow University. The Crichton Campus (the University of Glasgow's base in Dumfries) opened that same year. This presented an opportunity to look at a different type of degree, which would draw on extensive curriculum provision at Dumfries and build a strong partnership with Dumfries and Galloway Council. A small working group was set up, which included serving headteachers, representatives from Dumfries and Galloway Council and the University. The journey of the MA through to its first delivery in 2008 was arduous, involving local and national politics, financial difficulties and the threatened withdrawal of the University of Glasgow's Dumfries campus in 2007. The Scottish Government was also pushing forward with the idea of an education degree or similar course in South West Scotland but there were difficulties, some sensitive in nature. Other universities in Scotland already offered undergraduate courses deemed similar to that which the University of Glasgow was proposing and worked with the schools in Dumfries and Galloway for their placements. However, none of these was then working in close partnership with the local education authority (LEA). Finances were a major issue, but with the help of a local MP, funding for teacher education at the Crichton campus was enabled. The group now had to have everything in place by the end of 2007.

At this time the existing University of Glasgow degree was nominated as a BEd. The working group continued developing the new programme as a creative and innovative master's degree with children's development at the centre, drawing on research and good practice worldwide. It needed to be founded on a strong, conceptual basis and build on innovative developments such as Teachers for a New Era (Carnegie Corporation, 2006). This initiative, introduced initially in 11 higher education institutions in the USA, sought to develop an 'academically taught clinical profession' (Carnegie Corporation 2006:3) and transform teacher education programmes by 'building a more effective curriculum and strengthening the analytical research component' (ibid.:1). Underlying principles were high quality, research-based teaching at the university, combined with structured practical tasks in the classroom and 'evidence-based practical evaluation techniques' (ibid.:5). One of the key aims was to enable teachers to 'develop more fully their abilities to assist in their pupils' growth and development' (ibid.:4), and to this end, the programmes were intended to include continuing professional development and support in the first two years of teaching.

In response to this and a review of teacher education (Scottish Executive, 2005), the University of Aberdeen (2006) developed an outline for Scottish Teachers for a New Era, based on similar principles. A six-year model of teacher education was proposed, with the first two years devoted to providing a rich curriculum knowledge base, the next two years focusing on the teaching process, linking with two years' induction and support, as in the American model. This model found favour with the Scottish Government, which was looking for a 'radical restructuring of initial teacher education' (University of Aberdeen, 2006:4) and welcomed the proposals for 'research-based practice' (ibid.).

The Dumfries group concentrated on writing the documentation to support the new degree, in particular ensuring that the rich curriculum available on the campus was incorporated into the degree, including modern foreign languages, and that it embodied the spirit of Teachers for a New Era and its Scottish counterpart (Carnegie Corporation, 2006; University of Aberdeen, 2006). From the outset, the programme also had a significant portion of its time devoted to school experience and the partnership with the LEA was crucial. Several local headteachers (who later formed part of the degree's Board of Management) were involved in consultation in relation to the school placement aspect and this led to the development of the placement tasks.

This coincided with the planned implementation of A Curriculum for Excellence (CfE) (Scottish Executive, 2004, 2006) for 3-18 year-olds in Scotland, which set out a broad-based curriculum, with literacy and numeracy at its core, and a strong emphasis on arts subjects, cross-curricular learning and creative approaches to teaching and learning. The four key aspirations of the new curriculum were to produce: *successful learners* with a strong motivation for learning; *confident individuals*, with self-respect and strong values; *responsible citizens*, with knowledge and understanding of the world and Scotland's place in it and respect for others' beliefs and cultures; and *effective contributors*, who are self-reliant and resilient, able to work in partnership and apply critical thinking in new contexts (Scottish Executive, 2004:12). These key principles were also embedded into the new programme.

Further activity continued right up until the summer of 2008 when the complete degree was presented to the General Teaching Council for Scotland (GTCS). It was accepted unconditionally, a great boost to the team that had worked on it, as an unconditional acceptance from GTC Scotland is very rare.

### **Starting up and the first year**

August 2008 was very late to recruit a cohort of students ready to begin the course in a matter of a few weeks, but the first cohort of 24 students enrolled on the degree in September 2008. The course

leader was initially a seconded headteacher from the LEA, and staff subject specialisms were in line with not only the conceptual basis of the degree - child development - but also the Scottish priorities of numeracy and literacy (Scottish Executive, 2006). A range of social science, language and arts subjects offered by other subject specialists on the Crichton campus provided the range and depth of subject knowledge suitable for an in-depth preparation to meet the wider, cross-curricular demands of A Curriculum for Excellence (CfE) (ibid.:14), as it was developed and implemented in response to teacher feedback and evaluation (University of Glasgow, 2009).

The course provision in the first year consisted of literacy, mathematics, child development and school experience. Students were also required to choose two elective courses from the wide course menu on the campus. There was a serial school placement of one day a week for eight weeks in semester one, followed up in the spring with a four-week placement. This pattern is similar for each group after the first year, with the length of placements increasing each year, culminating in a ten-week placement in the final year, and has remained essentially the same, although specific timings in relation to assignments have altered (see Table 1.).

**Table 1.** MA (Hons) with QTS Course description, 2014.

<b>Year 1</b>	<b>Year 2</b>
Child Development & Learning 1	Child Development & Learning 2
Literacy 1	Literacy 2
Mathematics Theory & Pedagogy 1	Mathematics Theory & Pedagogy 2
School Experience 1 (serial placement + 4-5 week block practice in June)	School Experience 2 (3-week block placement in August-September; 5-week block placement in May-June)
Text & Communication	Issues in Contemporary Society
Choice of courses in e.g. health & social policy, modern languages, environmental studies, history, literature and philosophy.	Further choice of courses from range of elective subjects.
<b>Year 3</b>	<b>Year 4</b>
Language & Literacy	Honours Dissertation – Primary Education (10,000 words, based on original research in specialist area of choice)
Mathematics Theory & Pedagogy 3	The Teacher as a Professional
Teachers & Teaching	School Experience 4 (10-week block placement in semester 2)
School Experience 3 (6-week block placement in Feb-March)	Education in its Wider Contexts
Curriculum & Assessment	Courses and lectures in science, Scots, higher order thinking skills, religious and moral education, arts, music, PE.
Choice of elective subjects.	

The rationale for this pattern was to provide a strong basis of curriculum knowledge through core and elective courses alongside teaching experience from the outset, so that students would have opportunities to critically reflect upon and integrate theory and practice throughout the four-year programme. Such principles of critical reflection and clinical practice are at the heart of models of teacher education such as the Oxford Internship scheme (McIntyre, 1997) in England; Teachers for a New Era and subsequent models in the USA (Carnegie Corporation, 2006; NACTE, 2010); and some European and other global programmes (Darling-Hammond & Lieberman, 2012; Zeichner, 2010). In particular, the development of master's level programmes with teaching qualifications in Australia

(Burns & Mutton, 2013; McLean Davies et al., 2013) include a similar synthesis of theory and practice, based on evidence-based teaching and collaborative planning.

Student evaluations after the first year were positive: most were highly enthusiastic about the course and considered it gave them a very good grounding in child development and core subjects, as well as a useful introduction to school experience (Student feedback, June 2009). The students particularly valued the interactive teaching methods employed by tutors; tutors' responsiveness to needs and support given while on teaching placements; and student involvement on the course Board of Management. They found the first semester very intensive, however, and made suggestions for improving the timing of assignments and exams in relation to school placements (*ibid.*); these were altered the following year. The external examiner praised the course leader and tutors for an impressive start to an innovative programme (University of Glasgow, external examiner report, 2008-9).

Recruitment in subsequent years has developed into a rigorous whole day process, and this has paid dividends in the stronger overall quality of students' academic work (as evidenced in external examiner reports), and good employment rates: 97% students in work/study six months after completing the degree (University of Glasgow, Crichton campus prospectus, 2014), with most finding teaching posts locally or in their home areas. Maintaining statistics on applications has helped us to bid for increasing the number of funded places. We monitor where the applications come from, whether they are local to Dumfries and Galloway, the rest of Scotland, other parts of the UK and the Republic of Ireland. The Scottish Funding Council is sympathetic to our situation as the demand for places has grown dramatically over the last four years: currently there are 40 funded places, for which there were 644 UCAS applications in 2014.

#### **School experience and the partnership in action**

A teaching qualification should be a guarantee of good communication skills, the ability to think at a high academic level and the ability to work well with others (Darling-Hammond, 2006). The original headteachers who worked on putting the degree together felt that one of the main thrusts of the MA should be the quality and amount of time spent in school. As a result, the MA has more contact hours in school than other degrees on offer in Scotland; the inclusion of the LEA from the early stage of the course development was crucial in this development. Over the last four years, 62 out of a possible 103 primary schools in the region have been included.

The original school experience tasks that were introduced in 2008 have also been developed further to match the students' growing knowledge and experience. For instance, the tasks move the student teachers from taking a reading group to small group and whole class teaching, with the class teacher or on their own, depending on their placement and individual needs. The LEA helps to deliver many aspects of the course in school experience lectures, including music, art, drama, PE and higher order thinking skills to various year groups. Colleagues at the Faculty of Education deliver lectures in science, Scots, religious and moral education, as well as providing elective courses.

A new course leader drawn from the Faculty in 2010 improved the programme documentation and guidance, and introduced an intranet; these helped strengthen the links between the university, LEA and schools (internal Board of Management Report, 2010-11). As the programme developed, the team sought to provide each cohort of students with a relevant and holistic grounding in their education degree that would prepare them for teaching, with a sound understanding of how children learn, as well as a range of subject knowledge firmly based in the links between theory and practice. This was confirmed by the student evaluations and external examiner reports. For example, students praised the way in which school experience 'helped to make sense of the theory' (student evaluations, June 2010) by complementing and consolidating theoretical inputs. The external

examiner commended the increasingly high standards of academic work (external examiner reports, 2009-10 and 2010-11): most students demonstrated strong subject knowledge; good understanding of children's developmental stages; and an ability to draw on a wide range of key theorists and to link these to school experience (ibid.).

### **Developments in research-based clinical practice**

Problem-based learning (PBL) has long been established as a tool for delivery in medical schools and it was considered important that this be incorporated in a similar way in the education of pre-service teachers, as in research-based clinical practice models (Burns & Mutton, 2013; McLean Davies et al., 2013). Lectures on child development and learning follow this pattern; problems are based on real events that have been anonymised. The students are presented with a scenario where they have to consider all aspects and find academic evidence to show how they have come to their decision (for more detail see Patrick & McPhee, 2014). This practice was recently witnessed in operation and praised by a team of teacher educators from Swansea University. The students learn to search relevant journals that will not only help them resolve the current problem, but also embed good habits for research when it comes to planning and writing their master's dissertation. Recent evaluation (Patrick & McPhee, 2014) found that students regard the scenarios as useful and important contexts through which professional practice and academic theory can be linked. In her book *Powerful Teacher Education*, Darling-Hammond (2006) maintains that case studies add context to theory. They allow students to critically analyse the cases and explore the lessons and insights that are offered, so they can develop an interpretation of events as they work through the process.

Interdisciplinary activities which combine theory and practice are embedded in the programme, meeting Curriculum for Excellence requirements. For example, second year students this year worked with members of the Education Centre at Abbotsford (home of Sir Walter Scott) and Historic Scotland, to develop active learning experience plans using the CfE as well as a heritage site. The plans and preparation culminated in a day working with local primary children in the Borders. This was a completely interdisciplinary exercise and involved art, history, literacy and music. The learning experience plans which were developed will be put on to GLOW, Scotland's interactive education website for teachers and pupils. The students can see an interdisciplinary approach in action, school pupils have first-hand experience of seeing 'their university' at work in their town and for school staff there is a 'return fixture,' as this is an exercise planned by staff and students at Glasgow University. Future plans include proposals to run a primary environmental studies day next year, also involving local primary children.

In the fourth year, students complete a research-based master's level dissertation, focusing on a subject or issue of their own choosing. Planning and research have to be carried out alongside their final ten-week teaching practice; the combination of teaching and research is intense, but the results have been exceptional. Recent topics include: synthetic phonics and early reading; modern languages; outdoor learning and CfE; drama and formative assessment in mathematics; and constructivism in ITE in Scotland. External examiner feedback has commended the scholarly approach, robust ethical procedures, critical analysis and 'strong synthesis of the relevant literature with practical experience and empirical enquiry' (external examiner, 2011-12). Such developments not only ensure that the students attain a master's level standard by the end of the degree, they also enhance the research-based nature of the programme as a whole and help to meet the Scottish General Council of Teachers' requirements (GTCS, 2013a). These advise that ITE students 'should have the capacity to know about research and scholarship and, where appropriate in the future, be actively able to practise research through, for example, professional enquiry' (ibid.:3).

### **The future**

In its innovative approach to teaching and other aspects of its constitution, the MA is very much aligned to the recommendations of the Donaldson Report (2011), *Teaching Scotland's Future*. The two main thrusts that give the MA this advantage are the combined nature of the degree, as well as the fact that its clinical practice model is unlike that of the BEd, which Donaldson feels should be phased out, because of 'an over-emphasis on technical and craft skills at the expense of broader and more academically challenging areas of study' (Donaldson, 2011:39). The Report recommends a strengthening of links between schools, universities and other agencies, and between theory and practice (Donaldson, 2011:5), with proposals for teachers' 'extended professionalism' (ibid.) in relation to teachers' developing careers, which are now enshrined in the GTCS standards for teachers (GTCS, 2012a).

Donaldson praises university-based ITE for providing 'a strong intellectual and academic dimension to initial teacher education and the positive contribution of research to inquiry-based practice' (ibid.:31) and commends the development of combined master's and teaching degrees. The Report proposes that the original vocationally-oriented BEd degree should be replaced with such degrees, which offer a combination of 'in-depth academic study in areas beyond education with professional studies and development' and involve 'staff and departments beyond those in schools of education' (ibid.:88). This development is exciting for the staff at Dumfries and will help to shape the next stage of the development of the MA.

There is a one-year induction scheme in Scotland whereby newly qualified teachers are guaranteed payment and can be employed to complete their probationary year in a local school (Beauchamp et al., 2013). This enables them to gain professional recognition and complete a portfolio that demonstrates their commitment and early professional development (GTCS, 2012a), with further support in their second year. Since the financial crisis of 2008 and beyond, and a host of swingeing cuts in all aspects of education right across Scotland, one wonders how long Scotland will continue to be able to offer its graduate teachers this opportunity.

Since the academic session 2009-2010, the University of Glasgow's Crichton Campus has become the School of Interdisciplinary Studies which comes under the College of Social Science. There has been a review of the degrees on offer and greater development of the interdisciplinary nature of both existing and new degrees. The MA Primary Education with QTS seeks re-validation in 2014 and for this, it is important to look at the components of the degree that have made it unique. Liberal Arts degrees have been phased out from the campus curriculum, so we have lost some of the elective subjects that our students could choose. This had been seen by the MA team as one of the strengths of the degree. Although the student choice is now more restricted, this should not negatively affect the students' ability to deliver the cross-curricular nature of the Scottish Curriculum for Excellence as choices will open up in different directions. For example, looking at environmental areas, including geography, from the new degrees may help students to develop greater interest and specialism in this aspect of the primary curriculum, giving the MA students a broader base of subject knowledge as they enter the profession (GTCS, 2013a). Equally, the modern foreign languages on offer (French and Spanish, chosen by students as electives) will allow students to graduate with an expertise in an MFL studied at university level.

As its name suggests, the 'MA (Hons) in Primary Education with Teaching Qualification' is a combined degree. The team has already seen that there are students who are perfectly capable of completing the degree from an academic point of view but who find that they do not want to pursue the teaching aspect of the course. A challenge for the future is to examine what career prospects there are in education for these students, in line with proposals from the Donaldson Report (2011). Employability comes into the strategic vision for the university in the next three to five years so this

also sits alongside the Donaldson Report very well. Revalidation must ensure that the programme is 'Donaldson' compatible, as well as meeting GTCS requirements (2013, a & b).

In the first four years of its delivery, staff involved in teaching the degree inevitably focused on developing teaching materials and embedding the programme in the community and the university, which has left little time for any major research initiatives. However, with the growing need for critical, self-analysis and research-informed developments, this has now become a priority; one recent project, for example, focussed on the problem-based learning aspects of the programme (Patrick & McPhee, 2014). One of the current research interests is a longitudinal study which will track the first cohorts to graduate through their probationary year and beyond, as they gain professional recognition and first promotions, and identify whether or not they remain in Dumfries and Galloway.

An annual conference showcases the action research undertaken by probationers from both Dumfries and Galloway and other parts of Scotland. Continuing action research beyond the probationary year is a key recommendation of the Donaldson Report (2011). One of the main thrusts of proposed research will look at the impact of their probationary periods on the action research that they undertake during that time, embedding the idea of becoming a reflective practitioner, not only from a personal point of view but also the impact upon the school. Again, this has echoes of the Donaldson Report and throws up the hope that the leadership paths of the future will be opened up for this new generation of teachers (see GTCS, 2012b). This aspect of the future development of the MA is an exciting challenge for all of us.

### **Conclusion**

There is not space here to mention those who have contributed to the development of this unique degree, but without the efforts and commitment of the original working party, the support from local headteachers and the LEA, our external examiner and all the staff members involved, it would not have progressed. Demand for this course is great and the number of students it is attracting (644 UCAS applications in 2014 for 40 places) is clearly helping to revive the Crichton campus. Align this with strong leadership on the campus, a shared vision of how we fit into the whole university instead of existing in isolation and the prospects for both degree and campus look positive.

In seeking thoughts from colleagues about the strengths of the degree over these first four years, most have mentioned the combined aspect of the degree and how, on such a small campus, it makes economic sense to make the most of aspects of other degrees that will be supportive to primary education students. Besides this, there are real opportunities arising from the School of Interdisciplinary Studies working with the CfE's cross-curricular nature, which can be used with Higher Level school students on 'workshop' days, thus helping to advertise the MA and help to grow our numbers. However, the inclusion of elective courses is not just economically useful, but central to the vision of the degree. As explained earlier, this is built on clinical practice principles, as in Teachers for a New Era (Carnegie Corporation, 2006; University of Aberdeen, 2006) and the Donaldson Report recommendations (2011), combining academic components at master's level alongside extensive professional development in the classroom through intensive, problem-solving approaches, with child development at the core.

Research about the programme, its student participants and the transition from university to teaching within the local authority, is an exciting development which is important to gain insights into the degree and guide its further growth, and the team can only be strengthened by this. The partnership with the LEA is also a strength and the plans to continue to develop this are good. At the same time, it may be beneficial to see that it is possible for this to be a two-way process - in other

words, to identify what the University of Glasgow, School of Interdisciplinary Studies, can offer the local authority.

Increasing our numbers is vital; how to do this and still maintain the quality of the university and school experience will be the challenge. There are two points to consider here; that we have used 62 out of 103 possible schools for placement, and the other is that geographically there are huge distances to cover to some of the more far-flung schools that have not yet been used. There is room here for thinking creatively. The good practice that has been so much a part of the first four years cannot remain static and the problem-based learning approach can be widened (Patrick & McPhee, 2014). We already have several international students on the course and this is another area ripe for development. The possibility of organising a degree by distance learning may be worth following through.

Following Donaldson (2011), it is now understood that degrees which concurrently combine significant academic study in and beyond education alongside rigorous professional development for teaching, offer a more relevant way forward than the traditional Bachelor of Education model. These broader degrees enable students and staff to engage in greater depth with the university as a whole and provide graduating primary teachers with a sound basis for specialist interests throughout their career. The opportunity for cross-phase staffing flexibility is also afforded. The depth of study a combined degree offers may also carry a higher currency for those who do not wish to seek employment in teaching. Another possibility is that there may be a pathway into related professions such as social work.

Finally, the biggest immediate challenge is seeking revalidation, especially in the light of ensuring that the MA remains compatible with the Donaldson Report and GTCS requirements (2013a & b). In completing this task, many of the active approaches that have been innovative in the last four years could be usefully written into the next submission to GTC Scotland.

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